MR. WIND AND MADAM RAIN

Musset
Mr. Wind and Madam Rain

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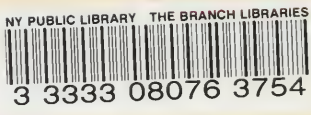

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THE GIANT OF THE CASK, THE MILLER AND HIS WIFE, AND THE BARON

MR. WIND

AND

MADAM RAIN

BY

PAUL DE MUSSET

Translated by

EMILY MAKEPEACE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHARLES BENNETT

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
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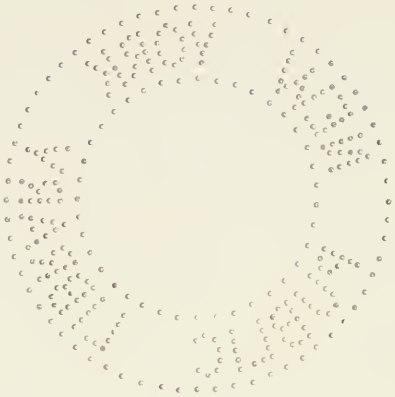

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THE STORY

OF

MR. WIND AND MADAM RAIN

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

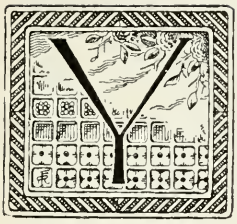
TO HER DEAR YOUNG PUPIL

GERMAINE DE MACHY

BY

THE TRANSLATOR

Preface



OU must know, my dear children, that there was once upon a time in Scotland an old blind man, with beard of silvery whiteness, named Ossian, who played exceedingly well upon the harp, and who went about the streets singing songs of his own composing. His father, whose name was Fingal, had been a great warrior; and therefore Ossian loved most of all to sing the exploits of his great warlike sire. When Ossian was dead other bards continued to chant his poems; and so it has happened that his productions have come down to our time. Other verses, however, were added by these bards to those of Ossian; so that, as some sang the deeds of the great warrior in one way, and others in another, it became at length impossible to trace the real history of the great Fingal.

At last a man, named Macpherson, determined to extricate the truth from this mass of confusion. He went to Scotland, and there, collecting the different songs of the bards, so arranged them as to show their agreement one with another. From these he composed other poems, which the Emperor Napoleon I. was very fond of, and used often to read. It has been suspected, but never proved, that Macpherson drew a great part of these poems from his own imagination, and set them down as those of Ossian. But what matters it whose they be, if only they are beautiful and entertaining?

It has been the same with Mr. Wind and Madam Rain as with the great Fingal. My grandmother used to tell the story of Madam Rain, without mentioning Mr. Wind; my uncle knew the history of Mr. Wind, though he never spoke of Madam Rain. But my nurse, who was a native of Brittany, had heard the two stories, and she jumbled them together into one, more complete and more wonderful than either taken alone.

Now, I went myself to Brittany a long time ago, and, following the example of Macpherson, I col-

lected all that was there related to me about Mr. Wind and Madam Rain, who are still frequent visitors in that part of the country.

Well, as your mamas doubtless teach you to abhor deception, I will not say that I have added nothing to the unconnected recitals of the Breton peasants, because that would be telling an untruth; but I have added only what was necessary to link together the different events, and to supply passages that were entirely wanting.

May this nursery tale, my dear children, amuse you still more than the history of the great Fingal did the Emperor Napoleon.

Paul de Musset.

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Mr. Wind and Madam Rain

Mr. Wind and Madam Rain

Chapter I

Mr. Wind Visits John Peter

BOUT the time when the good King Robert sang at the chorister's desk, there lived in Brittany a poor miller named John Peter, whose only wealth in the world consisted of a mill, a wretched hut, and a kitchen-garden, in which he planted cabbages and carrots: but John Peter was unfortunate, for he often saw his neighbours' mill-sails turning round on the hills, while his own stood still, because the wind never blew in his direction; and the vegetables in his garden withered from drought, in spite of the pains he took to water them. John Peter was not a man

of much spirit, and so he went on and spent his time in exclaiming, "Alas! Mr. Wind, why won't you blow on my mill?" and "Alas! Madam Rain, why won't you fall in my garden, so that I may gain a livelihood?" His lamentations, however, were of no avail; the Wind did not hearken, and the Rain troubled itself very little about them. In order to dispel his melancholy, the miller married a pretty peasant girl named Claudine, as poor as himself, but active, and a good housewife. Claudine cleaned the house, mended the linen, put everything in order, kept poultry, and carried the eggs to market; and after awhile, just when her household affairs began to prosper, she became the mother of a little boy, who received the name of Peter. All the money that Claudine had hoarded since her marriage was scarcely sufficient to purchase baby-linen, a cradle, and other things requisite for a mother and her child. Indeed, when these articles were bought, her last farthing was spent. To complete her misfortunes, she was now taken ill, and the village doctor had to be called in. John Peter neglected his work that he might wait on Claudine, for he had nothing to pay a nurse with;

HOW THE MILL TURNS AND THE CABBAGES GROW

and thus these poor people found themselves reduced all at once to frightful misery.

One night, while John Peter was sitting up watching near his wife and child as they slept, and reflecting on his and their wretched condition, he thought thus: "If all my troubles overwhelmed myself alone, I should not complain, for I am strong enough to endure cold and hunger; but my wife will need fire to warm her, good nourishment to strengthen her, and medicine in her sickness; and I have neither wood to put upon the fire, nor meat to make broth with, no, nor money to pay the doctor. I love my Claudine and her child more than all the treasures of the world; and I do not regret that I married a girl as poor as myself. The want of wind and rain is the sole cause of my distress. If only the wind would blow on my mill I should soon be able to get myself out of this scrape."

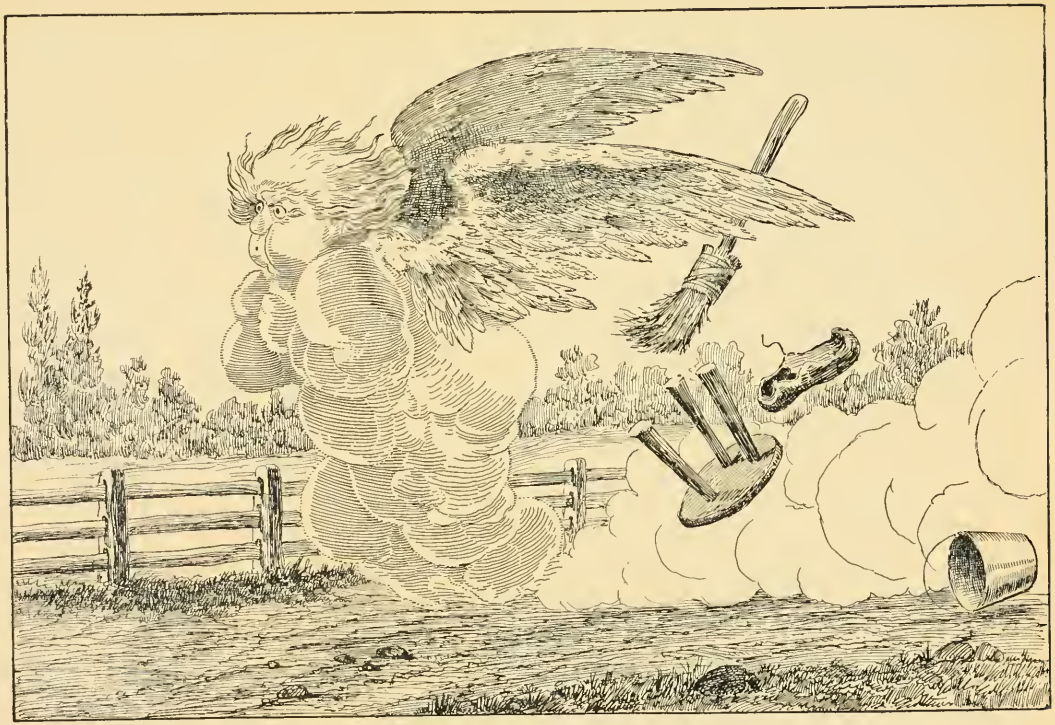
As John Peter uttered these last words, he saw the flame of the candle flicker, and heard the rusty weather-cock turning on the top of the cottage. The wind was just beginning to blow. The astonished miller ran quickly to his mill, and put grain enough

into the hopper for the night's grinding. He untied the cord which held fast the mill-sails, and then they began to turn round, and the mill set to work to grind the grain into flour and bran. John Peter now went back to his wife, who was still sleeping, and he rubbed his hands together as he thought of the good news he had to tell her when she should awake.

The rusty weather-cock, however, creaked louder and louder, and the candle had to be placed behind a curtain to prevent its being blown out ; there were so many holes and chinks in the walls of the cottage that the draughts came in everywhere. The window shook, and the door moved on its hinges, and the ashes from the hearth flew all about the room.

In the midst of this commotion John Peter thought he heard the voices of the wind-spirits whispering these words in his ears :

" Let us whistle," said these spirits ; " let us whistle through this broken pane, and let us try to tear off the paper that stops it up. Let us moan, let us moan through this hole. Let us cling to the thatch of this miserable cabin. Let us push against this ill-fastened door. Let us murmur, let us hum in this chimney."



MR. WIND PAYS A VISIT

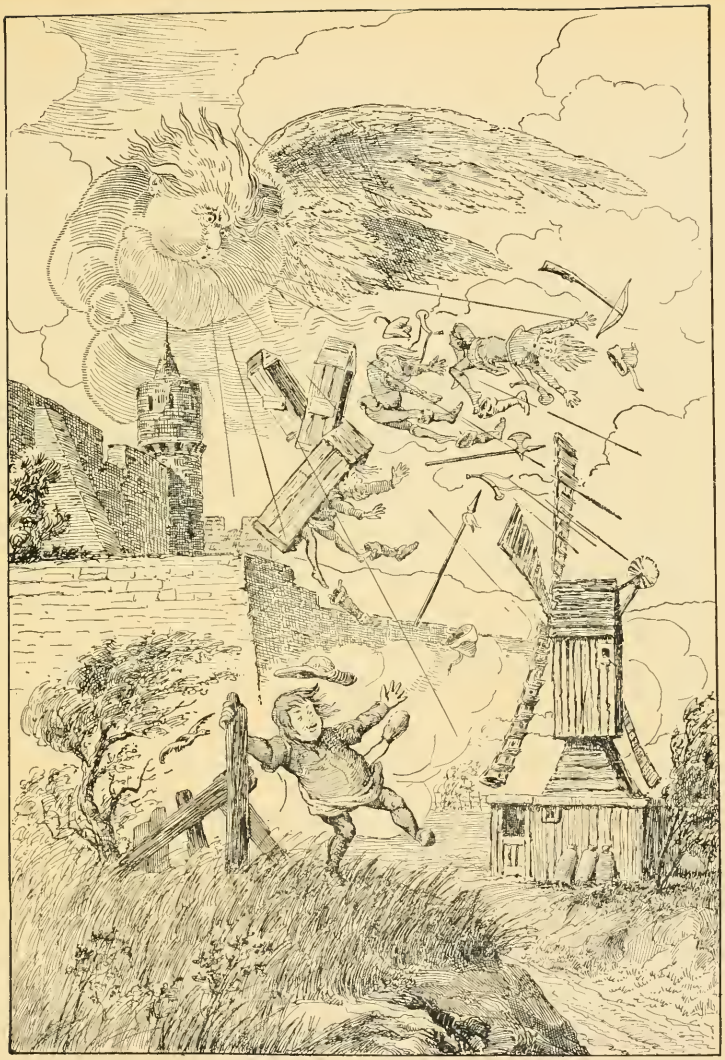
Notwithstanding the astonishment which these mysterious voices caused the miller, still he was not frightened; and he answered, "Whistle, moan, hum as much as you like, so that my mill turns." At the same instant the latch went up and the door burst wide open, and John Peter saw a most extraordinary figure enter. It was a personage who bore more resemblance to one of the Genii than to a man. His body could bend itself in every direction, it was so supple and elastic. His eyes shone like phosphorus, and his ample chest sent forth a noise equal to that which proceeds from a smith's bellows. The two large wings which were fastened to his shoulders could not have spread themselves in the cottage. A red mantle of thin stuff floated around him, falling into so many folds that the shape of his body could not be precisely distinguished. His feet glided lightly over the floor without walking; yet he seemed rather fatigued, as though he had come a long distance.

"Give me a chair," said he to John Peter, "that I may rest a moment with you before proceeding on my way."

The miller eagerly offered his best straw-bottomed

chair. "Sit down, my lord," said he, "and rest yourself as long as you like in my cottage; only have the goodness not to speak so loud, or you will awaken my wife, who is ill."

"Fear nothing," replied the stranger; "the murmur of my words will make her sleep more soundly. I am Mr. Wind. Thou hast several times addressed petitions to me. Thou wilt not wonder at my being a little out of breath when I tell thee that in less than an hour I have visited the entire sea-coast of Brittany, and travelled a long distance over the ocean. Thy lord, who lives at the neighbouring castle, would not receive me; his servants have shut all the doors and windows, and secured them with large bolts, and solid, well-wadded shutters; and I have scarcely been able to penetrate into the staircases through a skylight in one of the towers, or into the kitchen through a little air-hole. Nevertheless, I revenged myself on the sentinels who are on guard in the courts of the castle, by throwing down their sentry-boxes. At thy cottage, however, I found the walls in ruins, and the latch without a fastening. I had but to push thy door, and I entered forthwith.



MR. WIND BLOWS THE SENTRY-BOXES OFF THE CASTLE WALL

This is just the sort of cottage I like. Thou possessest but one poor straw-bottomed chair, and that thou didst most willingly offer at my entrance. I thank thee for this hospitable reception. Ask, therefore, some service of me, John Peter, and I will render it thee most freely."

"Mr. Wind," said the miller, "all I ask of you is to blow for three or four hours a day on my mill."

"My poor John Peter," replied Mr. Wind, "I am not permitted to go out every day. Madam Rain occupies the sky for a third part of the year, and, like an ungrateful creature, she drives me away after I have brought on her clouds; and the Sun agrees still worse with me. I sometimes live shut up in my cavern for months; but I will take care to send thee zephyrs and little spirits, who go out at my order to scour the country morning and evening; and I will order them not to forget thy mill. When thou art in trouble, unhappy, or persecuted, come to see me at my cavern, and I will give thee assistance. I live up above there, at the top of the southern mountain."

"Ah! Mr. Wind," exclaimed John Peter, "I am

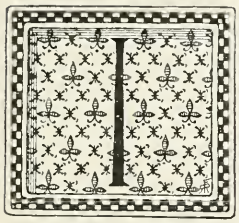
unhappy and in trouble at this very moment. If you would but come at once to my assistance!"

"It is too late for me to do so to-day," replied Mr. Wind; "I must start directly for Paris, where I have a dozen chimneys to throw down, and in half an hour I must be at home, for here is Madam Rain, close at my heels. Good-bye, John Peter!"

So saying, Mr. Wind sprang at one bound out of the cottage, spread his large wings, and disappeared. At the end of half an hour the whistling, the moaning, and the humming diminished, and afterwards died away altogether, and the miller then knew that Mr. Wind had returned from his voyage, and had re-entered his cavern on the peak of the southern mountain. But the little spirits he had left behind him were strong enough to keep the mill going.

Chapter II

Madam Rain Visits John Peter



MMEDIATELY after Mr. Wind had departed, rain began to fall: gently at first, and afterwards in torrents; and the brooks were swelled to overflowing. And when the parched earth had well drunk, pools were formed here and there, into which the rain, dropping, sounded like little bells. Again John Peter fancied he heard the voices of the rain-spirits, saying:

"Let us fall, let us fall on this thatched roof; let us wet, let us wet the whole of this cottage; let us water the leaves of the cabbages; let us cover these pebbles with water; let us ring in this spout; let us run along this beam; let us jump through this hole; let us fall, let us wet all that we can; little drops, drip, drip, drop!"

Instead of being afraid, John Peter repeated, "Fall, wet; water as much as you please! To-morrow my garden will be greener, and my cabbages the better for it."

As Mr. Wind had broken the latch, and gone out without shutting the door, it remained three or four inches ajar, and through this narrow space John Peter saw enter a tall lady of singular appearance, bearing more resemblance to a fairy than to a woman. She was somewhat transparent, and her face pale and thin, as if she were recovering from an illness. Her hair was straight, and fell down to her feet. Her eyes were dimmed by two streams of tears, and her nose was a little swollen from a cold in the head. Her dress and mantle were grey. Upon her silken scarf shone the seven colours of the rainbow. The lady advanced slowly, without seeming to move her feet, and stretched her arms, and yawned, more as if overcome with ennui than with fatigue.

"Give me a chair," said she to John Peter, "that I may rest for a moment before I go down into the valley."

"Sit down, ma'am," said the miller; "only have

MADAM RAIN DROPS IN

the goodness to speak a little lower, for my wife is ill and my child is asleep."

"Fear not!" replied the lady; "the noise of my words will make them sleep more soundly. I am Madam Rain, whom thou hast so often invoked. But five minutes ago I was eighteen hundred fathoms above the earth, and my descent has made me a little giddy. The lord of the neighbouring castle has shut his doors and windows in my face, but I have revenged myself by drenching his sentinels to the skin. I found chinks in the walls of thy cottage, and window-panes broken, and the door open; so I like this cabin of thine, and I will remember thy kind welcome. If I can serve thee in anything, take advantage of this opportunity, and ask me for whatever thou wilt, and I will give it thee."

"Madam Rain," said John Peter, "what could I ask of you but to be kind enough to fall two or three times a week on the vegetables in my garden?"

"Alas! friend," said the lady, "I do not gad about as often as I should like. The glorious time of the Deluge is past, and Mr. Sun is stronger than I; and when I am abroad he is constantly driving me back

to my grotto. And then there is my Lady Moon. Ever since the time of Adam I have been trying to find out whether she is favourable to me or not, and I have not yet been able to settle the question; but, with the aid of astronomers, I hope to know exactly, in three or four thousand years, what her intentions really are with regard to me. Except at thy cottage, I am looked crossly upon everywhere, and am shut up about two thirds of the year; but I will send thee my morning dews, and the little clouds to which I give the key of the fields between the gleams of sunshine; and should any misfortune befall thy wife or child, do not fail to inform me, and my protection shall not be wanting."

"Ah! Madam Rain," replied John Peter, "protect them now! My wife is ill, and, if she lose her milk, my little Peter will die."

"Thou oughtest to have told me that at first," replied the dame: "thou art but a clumsy fellow, John Peter: I am obliged to set off directly to wet the plains of Normandy and Beauce. The Sun, too, is coming soon to dry all my work. So, adieu! honest John Peter; I live in my western grotto by the seashore."

Madam Rain slipped through the partly opened door, and descended to the bottom of the valley. At the end of an hour Aurora began to blush; the rain-spirits murmured less loudly; the brooks became threads of water, and were voiceless; and the sound of the little bells died away. A flood of sunshine soon dispersed the clouds, and the miller now understood that Madam Rain had retired to her western grotto by the seaside.

John Peter left his cottage and went to his mill; there he found flour sufficient to fill two sacks. He then went to his garden and gathered cabbages and lettuce, which the rain had quickly brought to perfection. The flour he carried to a farmer, who gave him two crown pieces for it; and the vegetables he sold in the market. His wife was still sleeping when he returned home, with a faggot of wood on his shoulder, good provisions in his basket, and money in his pocket.

Chapter III

In the Cavern of the Wind

OHN PETER'S wife, having slept till morning, had heard neither wind nor rain; so she was surprised when she was told that the mill had been turning all night, and when she saw the money and provisions which her husband had brought home. Sleep had already hastened her recovery; and the joy she now felt, completely restored her to health. John Peter, however, did not say a word to his wife about the two extraordinary visitors who had been at the cottage.

Claudine, thought he, has more sense than I have, but then she is rather fond of tattling; and she would go and tell my secrets to her gossips, and that might injure me.

On the following days the mill turned morning and

MADAM RAIN MAKES HARD TRAVELLING FOR THE BARON'S SOLDIERS

evening; the dew came down on the garden; and with a good fire on the hearth, John Peter and his wife fared pretty well. Claudine quite recovered her strength, and little Peter looked fresh and blooming like a rosy apple. In short, happiness and cheerfulness again visited the miller's dwelling.

One day the lord of the neighbouring castle, as he was going out hunting, passed John Peter's cottage. Now, lords at this time possessed great power; and when they were good they made their vassals happy; but when they were bad they tyrannised over them, and treated the poor peasants very cruelly. This lord, to whom John Peter was vassal, was very hard-hearted; he was excessively fond of money, too, and, in order to procure it, oppressed his people with taxes. He made them pay a poll-tax,—that is, a tax for every person, "poll" being an old word for head,—a tenth of their property, for the queen's girdle, and found out for them a hundred other vexations. The miller, on seeing his lord, was struck with dismay, for he thought the visit boded him no good.

"Ho there! John Peter," cried the Baron, without alighting from his horse, "thou owest me six

months' *taxes*, and to-morrow I shall send my steward to thee for the sum of ten crowns."

"My lord Baron," replied the miller, "grant me three months' delay. My wife has been ill; and if I give you ten crowns, which is all I possess, I shall have no money left for myself."

"I will not grant thee even three days," replied the Baron. "If thou dost not pay to-morrow, all that thou hast shall be sold, and thou shalt be dragged from thy cottage, and I will make thee work in my fields under the lash."

The Baron then galloped away without listening to the complaints of his vassal.

On the following day came the steward from the castle, carrying a money-bag, and John Peter was obliged to pay him the ten crowns. This sum was all that the miller had been able to put by during a month; so the benefits of Mr. Wind and Madam Rain were now lost, and Claudine began to weep bitterly.

"Do not cry," said John Peter to her; "everybody is not as wicked as the Baron. Give me my hob-nailed shoes, my stick, and my woollen mantle; I have

THE MILLER SEEKS MR. WIND

a visit to pay. Do not be uneasy if I be not at home till late; I shall have some good news to bring you."

Claudine guessed directly that her husband was keeping a secret from her. She therefore dried her tears, and began to ask the miller a thousand questions for the purpose of drawing this secret from him; but he would not tell, and he set out with his hob-nailed shoes, his stick, and his woollen cloak. After crossing some fields and meadows, John Peter at length arrived at the foot of the southern mountain. After climbing for the space of three hours through a wood of fir-trees, he came to wild heaths, and at last to steep rocks, which he ascended with the help of his hob-nailed shoes and his stick. Before sunset he arrived at the summit of the mountain; and, seeing the entrance to a cavern, the miller thought it must be the habitation of Mr. Wind; but as the cavern looked deep and gloomy, John Peter did not feel quite in spirits. He summoned up all his courage, however, and entered cautiously, feeling along the ground with his stick. He had scarcely taken five-and-twenty steps before he heard the voices of the little spirits.

"Let us blow upon this stranger," said these voices. "Let us tear off his mantle; let us blow off his hat."

But John Peter held his hat on firmly with one hand, and his woollen plaid with the other. At length he perceived a light, and recognised Mr. Wind, who was seated before a table eating his dinner. Jack-o'-lanterns danced round the table to light it, while other spirits brought dishes and flagons of wine from the bottom of two great holes that served for kitchen and cellar.

"Who goes there?" demanded Mr. Wind.

"It is I," replied the miller. "I am John Peter. Your Excellency deigned to rest himself at my house about a month ago."

"Well, what do you want with me?"

"I don't know, my lord," replied the miller, stammering.

"Thou idiot!" exclaimed Mr. Wind; "thou comes thither, and disturbest me when I am at table, and thou dost not even know thy errand! I see very well that I have given my protection to a simpleton."

MR. WIND DISTURBED AT DINNER

"Excuse me," replied John Peter; "respect for you deprives me of the power of speech. Since you first began to favour my mill, I have gained ten crowns; this morning my lord Baron sent and took them away from me, under the pretext of a tax. I beseech your Excellency, therefore, to help me, for I have nothing to trust in but your generosity."

"I have no time to occupy myself with thy affairs, nor to give thee advice," said Mr. Wind, in a surly tone. "Try to find out what thou desirest, and let me know in a few words."

"What I desire!" replied the miller; "why, whatever you are pleased to give me, provided that it keeps me from dying of hunger, which is the fate I am threatened with."

"Thou shalt not die of hunger," said Mr. Wind, more gently. "Give this creature here my little silver cask."

A spirit with wings like a bat immediately brought a pretty silver cask, no larger than those in which olives are packed. Another spirit brought a wand, also of silver, which he laid on the table.

"Here, take this cask and this wand," said Mr.

Wind ; "and, when thou art at home, strike the casket with the wand, and thou shalt see what thou shalt see. Now go to the dogs, and leave me to dine in peace."

Chapter IV

The Silver Cask

NIGHT had closed in when John Peter left the cavern of Mr. Wind. He nearly broke his neck among the rocks; his woollen cloak was torn by the bushes, and his feet got wet in a marsh in spite of his hob-nailed shoes; but he never quitted hold of either cask or wand. He arrived at his own house at nine o'clock in the evening, and found his wife beginning to get anxious about him.

"What is that?" asked Claudine, as soon as she saw the little cask. "Where have you got this magnificent jewel from? I knew very well that you were keeping a secret of importance from me. You must explain this mystery to me directly. Are there any precious stones in the cask? Even were there nothing in it, the silver alone would be worth at

least a hundred pounds, without reckoning the workmanship. A goldsmith would give a large sum for it. Speak then, John Peter; I am dying to know the secret."

The miller then related how he had received a visit from Mr. Wind, and how that supernatural personage had promised him his protection, and had given him the cask and the wand, and had shown him how to use it. John Peter strongly advised his wife not to speak of this event to the gossips of the neighbourhood; but, instead of listening to his advice, Claudine began to chatter again.

"You see," said she to him, "how wrong it was of you to conceal this secret from me; I am shrewder than you are, and I should have given you good counsel, and then you would not have stood with your hands before you, looking stupid, as you did when Mr. Wind asked you what you wanted. I should have told you to reply, without the slightest hesitation, 'Give me ten thousand francs'; then you would have returned with ringing crown-pieces, instead of this silver cask, which will cost us some trouble to get rid of."

"Who knows?" replied the miller; "my cask may be worth more than you think Let us, first of all, give it a trial."

John Peter placed the little cask upright on the floor, and then, with a trembling hand, struck it with the silver wand. The barrel instantly opened in two parts, like a cupboard. On one side there was a little kitchen, and on the other side a very small pantry. In the kitchen were seen spits about the size of needles, pots like thimbles, and little saucepans and frying-pans, that were enough to make one die with laughing even to look at. A cook, three inches high, with a cotton nightcap hanging over his ear, and two little scullion-boys, were seen moving about before the kitchen-stove, blowing the fire, turning the spit, and tasting the sauces. They were roasting turkeys about as large as bees, and chickens no bigger than flies; they were also frying fishes thinner than silkworms just hatched, and cutting cabbages which appeared like pins' heads. All this while two men-servants, of the same height as the cook, were arranging the plates and dishes in the pantry. They were wiping little china plates about the size of threepenny-pieces, and

glasses which seemed made for Jenny Wren to drink out of. They filled the bottles with two drops of wine, and put two drops of water into the crystal decanters, and dinner was ready in a trice.

The miller and his wife stood amazed, watching these little folks, who were so quick and handy. Their amazement was, however, much greater when they saw the two dwarf men-servants come out of the little cask, jump upon the table, place on it all the smoking dishes, and lay covers for two; then, having arranged the first course in order, and put the bottles and the decanters in their proper places, and afterwards set out the second course and the dessert in a corner of the room, they re-entered their small pantry. The little silver cask shut up at once, and John Peter and Claudine saw nothing more; but, at the same instant, the dishes upon the table became real dishes of the ordinary size ; the roasted chickens, real roasted chickens ; the fish, fine large fish ; the bottles, large bottles filled with delicate wine ; and the cover-dishes, fine large ones of good silver. John Peter and his wife found themselves suddenly before an excellent supper, served for two persons, but sufficient for four.

They placed themselves at table and ate heartily, for they were hungry. The ragoûts were perfect, and the fowls done to a turn. John Peter drank Mr. Wind's health three times, and, as the wine was heady, the miller went to bed a little muddled ; he fell asleep and snored sonorously.

Claudine went to bed also ; but she did nothing but turn first on one side and then on the other, and could not go to sleep. She was anxious for morning to come, that she might go and relate the adventure to her neighbour, the milkwoman. This woman opened her eyes wide when she heard the story, and she several times repeated, with a sigh, that Claudine was very happy to be the friend of Mr. Wind and the possessor of the silver cask. As soon as the miller's wife had left her, the milkwoman put her basket on her head and went to carry her butter and cream to the castle. There she did not fail to relate what she had heard to her friend the cook. The cook told the news to the *valet de chambre*, and the valet, while he was assisting his master to dress, informed him of what had happened to John Peter. The Baron immediately conceived the design of possessing himself of the little

silver cask by force ; so he mounted his horse and rode off to the mill.

When the Baron arrived, John Peter was but just up, and Claudine had not yet returned home ; for, on leaving the milkwoman's, she had run to tell the adventure to the washerwoman, then to her gossip the woodman's wife, and then to her cousin the milkmaid.

"John Peter," said the Baron, "Mr. Wind, who is a friend of mine, told me this morning that he had given thee a little silver cask, in which there was a magical kitchen. Now, what need hast thou of eating roast turkeys in such a ruinous cabin as this, in ragged clothes, and with worm-eaten furniture? It would be much better for thee to get thy tumble-down house repaired by the mason and carpenter, and to buy warm clothing and dresses for thy wife, and cupboards, and linen, and arm-chairs to furnish thy cottage. Sell me, then, thy magical kitchen, and I will give thee ten thousand francs for it. With that sum thou canst build another house, purchase fields, cattle, and horses ; and so thou wilt become a rich landowner."

"My lord Baron," replied the miller, "when I have

laid out my ten thousand francs I shall have nothing left; while with my little cask I have victuals assured me for all my life."

"What!" returned the lord; "is it nothing to possess a good house and to cultivate fields?"

"That is true," said John Peter; "productive land is worth more than roasted fowls. Besides, my wife scolded me for not asking Mr. Wind for ten thousand francs; and, since you offer me this sum, why, I accept the bargain."

"Well and good," said the Baron; "thy wife is a sensible woman. Here are a thousand francs, which I have brought with me; I will pay the rest in a fortnight, and will at once make thee a written promise for it. Now, give me thy silver barrel."

The miller gave up the cask, and took the bag containing the thousand francs; and, as he did not know how to read, he accepted his lord's written promise without knowing its contents. After the Baron had gone off with the little silver cask, Claudine was not long in returning home, and John Peter told her what a good bargain he had just made. Immediately she began to utter the most lamentable cries and tear her hair.

"Ah!" said she; "must I, then, have for my husband a man who allows himself to be tricked like a fool? Unhappy am I to have married such a blockhead!"

John Peter went into a dreadful passion. "Capricious woman!" cried he, "did you not reproach me yourself for not having asked Mr. Wind for ten thousand francs, instead of this cask?"

"Great simpleton!" replied his wife; "when I said that, I did not yet know the value of the wonderful little cask. Don't you see that the little dwarfs have left us plates and dishes? Every day they would have given us good silver spoons, which we might have sold to the goldsmith. Why do people wish to have lands and houses and cattle? is it not that they may have roasted fowls to eat? Since we had these roast fowls, what need was there to run after fields and cattle? The crops might be destroyed by hail, and the cattle might die of the murrain; but with the little cask we should have been certain of never wanting anything. The Baron has made a fool of you. He does not know Mr. Wind; he deceived you in saying that he was one of his friends. Perhaps

he even will not pay you the other nine thousand francs which he promised to pay in a fortnight."

John Peter began now to understand his stupidity; but, instead of owning it, he only became more violent. "Then," said he, "it is by your gossiping that the Baron got to know my secret. You went off this morning to spread the news about."

Claudine, instead of confessing her fault, redoubled her lamentations. She called her husband a fool; John Peter called his wife a jade; and then they quarrelled as millers and their wives do: after which they were reconciled; for, in the main, the miller was a good husband, and Claudine a good wife.

Chapter V

The Golden Cask

IT happened just as Claudine had foreseen. The Baron, having become master of the little magical cask, troubled himself very little about his promises; and when the miller went to the castle and presented his note, he was turned out, and told that he was an insolent fellow for daring to ask his lord for money. So John Peter received but one thousand francs instead of the ten thousand which he had been promised. His regret and sorrow were increased when he was told that the wonderful little barrel supplied splendid dinners every day, in the dining-room of the castle, for as many persons as it pleased the Baron to invite. The Baron no longer wanted a cook, and turned away his scullions. At every entertainment the little dwarfs renewed the table-linen, the plates and dishes, and the

THE BARON NO LONGER WANTS A COOK

silver spoons and forks; and, though very miserly, the Baron often feasted his friends for the sake of geting such valuable leavings; and he soon had so many forks and spoons that he did not know what to do with them. John Peter swore by all that was sacred that never again would he let himself be deceived by the offers of his lord; and Claudine firmly resolved nevermore to confide a secret to her gossiping friends. Unfortunately, these wise resolutions did not retrieve past folly. With the thousand francs they had received the miller and his wife had their cottage repaired a little, by the mason and carpenter, and they bought a few household articles; and then, by dint of economy they lived on the rest during a year. At the end of the year the money was all spent; and John Peter no longer had the heart to work. Claudine, too, being inconsolable, neglected her needle and poultry-yard. The remembrance of the happiness they had lost embittered the lives of the poor people; and they found themselves more miserable and more cast down than ever. At last John Peter decided on paying another visit to Mr. Wind: and, to avoid all blame, he consulted his wife.

"This time," said Claudine, "you must try to reach Mr. Wind's before his dinner-hour. Do not venture to tell him of your past folly, but say that the Baron came and took the silver cask away by force. If he ask what you desire, answer directly that you would like another little cask, or something else just as wonderful."

The miller, having his lesson ready, set out at break of day, with his hob-nailed shoes, his stick, and his woollen mantle. As he knew the way, he lost no time, and arrived at the cavern at six o'clock in the morning. The sky, however, was covered with red clouds to the very horizon, and a storm was coming on. The spirits of the cavern were all speaking at once. Mr. Wind was calling for his travelling-dress, and was getting ready to go out. When he perceived the miller, he cried out in a stentorian voice:

"Master John Peter, thou hast the talent of always coming at unseasonable times! In a quarter of an hour I must be in the middle of the ocean, where I have two ships to wreck; so get thee gone instantly, or else I will throw thee down from the top of the mountain into the plain below."

MR. WIND IS OFFENDED

"Oh! my lord," said John Peter, "instead of tormenting those poor vessels that have never done you any harm, listen to me. I am unhappy and persecuted. The Baron came to my house this morning with his men-at-arms, and took away from me by force my little silver cask."

"That cannot be!" exclaimed Mr. Wind. "If anybody had tried to take the little silver barrel by violence, it would have become so large that they would have been unable to get it out of the house, either by the window or by the door. So that thou hast either sold it or given it away willingly. Thou art a knave and a liar, and I do not know what prevents me from breaking thy head!"

John Peter fell down on both his knees. "Forgive me, my lord," said he, whimpering; "if I have lied, it was because my wife told me to do so. I am grieved to the very heart at having incurred your displeasure."

"Well, and what dost thou want of me?"

"I should like another wonderful little cask," said John Peter.

"Let my little golden cask be given to him; but mind, it is my last present. If he ever put his

foot into my house again, let his neck be wrung instantly."

The spirits brought a pretty little cask and a wand. John Peter put them both under his arm, and ran off. Scarcely was he out of the cavern, when the storm broke out; and he heard Mr. Wind flying over his head with fearful rapidity. The spirits of the tempest accompanied the miller home with bursts of laughter.

"How happy he is!" said they; "how happy he is to possess the little golden cask!"

"Yes, I am happy," replied John Peter. "You may laugh as much as you like; I don't care for you."

Claudine was awaiting her husband's return with the greatest impatience; and when she beheld the little golden cask, she clapped her hands and jumped for joy.

"Here we are," said she, "rich for the rest of our lives. 'T is not silver services that we shall now have, but forks and spoons of gold. We shall sell them, and with the price we shall be able to buy lands, and houses, and castles. And though the Baron should offer us a hundred thousand crowns,

THE GIANT OF THE GOLDEN CASK

we will not let him have this little golden cask. Make haste, John Peter, make haste, and strike it with the wand, for I have not prepared the dinner; so great was my confidence in the goodness of Mr. Wind."

John Peter put the little barrel down on the floor, and struck it hard with the golden wand. The iron hoop flew off, and the barrel opened; and out came a black smoke, which rose to the ceiling. This smoke took a human form. John Peter and his wife distinguished a head and then a body: but such a head! as large as a pumpkin; with horrible features, and a body like the trunk of an oak. The miller found himself in the presence of a giant of extraordinary strength, armed with a club. As soon as the giant could stand upon his feet, he ran to John Peter, and caught hold of him by the collar of his coat with one hand, while with the other he gave him five-and-twenty blows on the back with his club — such terrible ones, that the poor man roared out most piteously. That done, the giant vanished into smoke again, and re-entered the little cask as he had come out of it.

Chapter VI

In the Western Grotto

THE miller and his wife were inconsolable. John Peter lay groaning on his bed for an hour; Claudine wept bitterly, and little Peter screamed with all his might. The miller's wife was just putting on her things to go and relate the sad adventure to her neighbour the milkwoman, when the Baron passed by on his return from the chase, accompanied by his grooms and huntsmen; and he entered the cottage to refresh himself.

"Why, what do I see there?" said he; "is that little golden barrel a fresh present from Mr. Wind?"

"Precisely so, my lord," replied the miller: "I am but just returned with my wonderful cask, and do not yet know what it contains."

"Thou must sell it to me, friend," said the Baron.

"No, no, my lord," said John Peter with a crafty look. "It is enough to have sold the little silver cask. I am not going to commit the same folly again."

"If I were, however, to offer thee a larger sum than I did the last time,— twelve thousand francs, for instance?"

"I would not let you have it for fifteen thousand!" answered John Peter.

"Well then, I 'll give thee eighteen thousand for it."

"And I," returned the miller, "will not take less than twenty thousand."

"The sum is enormous," said the Baron; "but as I have a regard for thee I will make the sacrifice. Here, thou shalt have two thousand crowns in ready money, and I will give thee a written promise for the rest."

"No, indeed, my lord; I know too well what happens with your written promises. You shall give me twenty thousand francs ready money, in good crown pieces, or you will never have the little golden cask; for perhaps I am again making a bad bargain."

The Baron was so afraid of losing his opportunity, that he sent off a special messenger to the castle, to ask the steward for the twenty thousand francs. In a quarter of an hour twenty sacks full of money were brought. John Peter verified the sum, placed the sacks in order in his cupboard, locked it, and popped the key into his pocket, and then delivered the cask into the hands of the Baron, who set off delighted with his acquisition.

On his return to the castle the Baron shut himself up in his own room, in order to try his wonderful little cask. He struck it with his wand, and directly out came the smoke, taking the form of a giant; and the giant gave the Baron twenty-five blows with his club. The servants of the Baron heard him uttering piercing cries. When they ran in, they found their master stretched on the floor; but the giant had already re-entered his dwelling, and nothing remained in the room save a slight smell of smoke. As the Baron's back was not as tough as the miller's, he was confined to his bed for two days with the pain; but he knew better than to boast of the blows he had received, therefore not a word did he say to anybody

of his adventure. He even feigned being highly pleased to possess the little golden cask.

In the meantime the miller and his wife employed their twenty thousand francs profitably. They bought fields and meadows; and they pulled down their miserable cabin, and had a beautiful farmhouse built in its place, with barns, cow-sheds, and stables; and a sheepfold besides, where they put a flock of sheep. John Peter had also ploughmen and day-labourers, and a man to attend to the mill. Instead of grinding corn for others, he made flour of the grain which he reaped. Claudine bought herself a silk dress to go to church in on Sundays. As soon as Peter was big enough, he was sent to school to learn to read; and at six years old, he knew more than either his father or his mother. These good people might have lived peacefully and happily had it not been for the wickedness of the Baron, who bore them a grudge for the blows he had received, and the twenty thousand francs he had paid them. He diverted himself by letting game loose on John Peter's land, and then, under pretence of hunting, he, with his dogs, horses, and huntsmen, laid the fields waste. In vain did

the miller complain; nobody paid the least attention.

One day the Baron had a quarrel with a neighbouring lord, and declared war against him. This was only an excuse for levying imposts on his vassals: he overwhelmed John Peter with them, and took away his ploughmen to be made soldiers of, and his horses to carry his soldiers to battle. The miller, seeing himself threatened with the chance of falling again into his former state of poverty, bethought himself of the promises made to him by Madam Rain. So, without saying a word to his wife, he took his hob-nailed shoes, his stick, and his woollen mantle, and set off and travelled a long distance until he came to the seashore and the Western Grotto. A grey light reigned in this grotto; a thin fog veiled the entrance, and the damp oozed out from between the rocks. Little spirits with fin-like wings fluttered about. In passing John Peter, they threw water on his nose, and whispered:

"Let us wet, let us soak, this silly fellow. Let us drench his mantle for him. Let us penetrate through his shoes and stockings."

THE MILLER DISCOVERS MADAM RAIN

But John Peter turned up the collar of his mantle, and walked boldly on till he reached the end of the grotto. There he found Madam Rain surrounded by grey nymphs, each as languishing and with as bad colds as herself. The dame was taking advantage of its being the middle of summer to lay in her stores. Little spirits were bringing one by one the drops of water which the sun had caused to rise from the sea, the rivers, the woods, the marshes, and the meadows. These drops the nymphs collected into golden cups, and then threw them into a large reservoir. When Madam Rain saw John Peter she began to gape ; she blew her nose, and said to him in a lamentable voice :

"Who is this tiresome fellow that comes to disturb me in my employment?"

"Madam," replied John Peter, "a long time ago you rested yourself a while at my house, and then promised to interest yourself in the fate of my child. Little Peter will soon be seven years old, and I am come to beg of you to do something for him. He deserves it for his good conduct, for he already knows how to read and write."

"What dost thou want me to do for him?"

"Madam, I am a poor peasant with no ideas; and I am unable to imagine anything; so I will leave it entirely to you."

"Booby that thou art!' said Madam Rain, sneezing, "to come here disturbing me, and not to know what thou wantest! I must, however, get rid of this man. Since his son knows how to read, let my large copper box be given to him, with the wand and the gilt-edged book. If little Peter is less stupid than his father it will be quite enough to make his fortune."

The spirits brought the large copper box, the wand, and the gilt-edged book. John Peter put them all under his arm, and ran off as fast as his legs would carry him.

Chapter VII

The Copper Box

"WIFE!" said the miller, as he reached his own house, quite out of breath, "look, here is a fine present which Madam Rain has just made me! and she assured me that, if our little Peter should turn out less stupid than I am, there was something inside it which would make a fortune for him."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Claudine; "then you had another secret that you did not tell me of. Is it possible you could have kept it so long? Who is Madam Rain? and what is this copper box? But be quick, and speak, for I can scarcely contain myself, I am so longing to know the secret."

John Peter then told of the visit he had received from Madam Rain the very night of the one he was

favoured with by Mr. Wind, and how she had promised to interest herself in the welfare of their little Peter; and that he had been to see her at the Western Grotto; and that she had given him the copper box, with the wand and the gilt-edged book.

"Good! good!" said Claudine, trembling; "if there is no new giant in the box, to wind up the matter with a fresh beating."

"Give me the book, mother!" said little Peter; "I will see what is written inside."

Peter opened the gilt-edged book, and read the title on the frontispiece. It was, "Twelve Plays, Composed by Madam Rain for the Amusement of Little Boys and Little Girls, and Performed by the Wonderful Puppets in the Copper Box."

"Strike the box with the wand, father!" said Peter; "don't be afraid; this box is a puppet-show."

The miller put the copper box on the table, took the wand, and struck the lid. The box opened immediately, the compartment in front fell down, and they saw a stage with a red curtain before it, and little lighted wax-tapers for the footlights. The bell announcing the commencement of the piece was

heard to ring three several times; the curtain was raised, and they beheld beautiful stage scenery representing a forest. A wooden puppet, five or six inches high, issued from the side-scenes, and began to gesticulate with so much expression that Peter immediately recognised the performance of the first act of the play, the words of which were in the book before him. He went behind the table, and read aloud the part of the little actor. Soon after, another character entered, and Peter, changing his tone, read his part also. He recited thus the whole of the first play, entitled "The Adventures of Merlin the Enchanter." At the close of the last scene the little wooden actors bowed to the audience, the curtain fell, and the copper box closed smartly.

"Father," said Peter, "strike the copper box again; we shall then be sure to see the second play, which is called 'The Love Adventures of Sir Jessamine and the Princess Eglantine.'"

John Peter struck the box again with the wand, and the theatre opened, and, sure enough, they saw the beautiful Eglantine appear, dressed in her rose-coloured robe. Peter recited the parts, assuming a softer tone

of voice when the Princess spoke, and a graver one when the knight was supposed to be speaking. After the second play the box shut up, as before; but John Peter struck it again with the wand, and they saw the third play, called "The Gifts of the Fairy Fly-foot." The miller and his wife sat up till midnight to see all the twelve plays, and Peter recited so many fine speeches that he made himself quite hoarse.

"These plays are certainly very amusing," said John Peter: "still this theatre is but a toy after all, and I cannot understand how it is to make a fortune for Peter."

"I understand well enough—that I do!" cried Claudine; "everybody will wish to see our wonderful show. Peter will have to go to the neighbouring chateaux, with his copper box, his wand, and his gilt-edged book. He will amuse the children of the great folks; they will feast him, and he will have presents made him; and who can tell but that some day he may marry a Princess Eglantine, just like Sir Jessamine?"

"Pack of nonsense!" muttered John Peter, dozing off to sleep.

Chapter VIII

Peter at the Castle

THE next morning Claudine rose at daybreak, put on her bonnet, and went out of the farm to go and tell the news to her neighbour, the milkwoman. But in her account she so jumbled together Madam Rain, the Western Grotto, and the nymphs, with Merlin the Magician, and the Princess Eglantine, that her neighbour thought her crazy. The milkwoman, however, when she took her butter and cream to the castle, did not fail to relate the adventure, as well as she could, to the cook. The cook spoke of it to the valet, and he went off immediately in search of the Baron. Soon after John Peter saw his lord arrive at the farm.

"My friend," said the Baron, "I have just met Madam Rain, who is a friend of my wife, in a wood.

She spoke to me about a copper box, with a puppet-show in it, and she advised me to buy it of thee to amuse my children with."

"But this box does not belong to me," said the miller; "it was given to my boy Peter."

"Well, then, I will buy it of Peter," replied the Baron. What dost thou want with a puppet-show, Peter? It is all well enough for rich people like us. Wilt thou go and throw away all thy time in looking at dancing dolls, instead of minding thy work? A hundred crown-pieces would be more worth to Peter, than all the dolls in the world."

"That is just my opinion," observed John Peter; "but my wife scolded me so much for selling you the little silver cask, that I shall do nothing without consulting her first."

Claudine entered at this moment, and the lord offered her first a hundred crowns for the magical theatre, then a thousand, and at last two thousand; but she would not hear a word. The Baron at length grew quite angry, and said that they refused his offers merely for the sake of annoying him, but that he would take care and have his revenge. Little Peter, hearing

this, doffed his cap, and, bowing to the Baron, said, "My father has told you, my lord, that the puppet-show belongs to me. If you and the Baroness have no objection, I will bring my theatre to the castle and make my actors play before your children as often as you ask me to do so."

"Well, be it so," said the Baron; "you are a fine little fellow. Bring your show this evening after dinner, and I will reward you for your pains."

When evening came, Peter put the copper box into a wheelbarrow and trudged off with it to the castle. The Baroness was a beautiful and amiable lady, good and charitable, and she endeavoured, as far as it lay in her power, to soften her husband's temper. She had three lovely children—a girl and two boys. Peter was received in the kindest manner: he was caressed and had cakes given him, and the Baroness slipped some money into his hand. The first time Peter made his puppets act the first play only, and it was found so pretty, that he was entreated to return on the morrow. The next day he showed the second play, and so on, one after the other, till the twelfth day. When the plays were finished, the children

would have them all over again. So Peter got into the habit of going every day to the castle, and never did he get back to the farm without having received caresses, cakes, and money ; and the miller, seeing his son return home every evening with his pockets full, understood at length the full value of Madam Rain's present.

The little daughter of the Baroness, who was of the same age as Peter, was passionately fond of the puppet-show : her name was Marguerite. She had the loveliest blue eyes and the most beautiful light hair ever seen ; but she was good, gentle, and always sweet-tempered, which is even better than being beautiful. Peter loved her very much, and Mademoiselle Marguerite was very friendly towards Peter. One evening, after the play, she sighed and said, " You are very happy, Peter, in having such a wonderful theatre ; Madam Rain has given you a toy fit for a princess."

" Mademoiselle," replied Peter, " I am, indeed, happy in possessing something that pleases you, in order to give it you. If my theatre is fit for a princess, perhaps you may find it worthy of yourself, and I offer it to you with all my heart."

Marguerite had a great desire to accept the present. but the Baroness would not consent to her doing so.

"Peter," said she, "you are too generous. Keep your magical box; my daughter does not wish to deprive you of it."

"Leave him alone," said the Baron; "if it suits him to give his theatre to Marguerite, he must not be prevented. Make yourself easy, my boy; my daughter will accept your present without any pressing."

"Mademoiselle," continued Peter, "the theatre is yours, and here is the wand: amuse yourself as much as you like with the puppets."

When John Peter learned that his son had given the copper box away, he fell into a great passion.

"Don't be angry, father," said Peter; "it is true I have given the copper box and wand away, but I have kept the gilt-edged book, and you will see that they will send as usual for me to-morrow to read the play."

The miller, however, would not hear a word, and was on the point of beating his son, had not Claudine fortunately taken little Peter in her arms.

"John Peter," said she to her husband, "our boy

is a good deal cleverer than you are; what he says is reasonable. Wait at least till to-morrow before you whip him."

The next day a servant from the castle came to fetch him as usual, for he was wanted to make the puppets talk. After the play Marguerite again sighed, and said:

"Dear Peter, if you do not give me the gilt-edged book your pretty present will be of no use to me."

"Here it is, then," replied Peter; "I kept it only that I might have the pleasure of showing you the performances myself; but, since you desire to have the book, I am quite willing to give it you."

John Peter again fell into a dreadful passion on learning that his son no longer had the gilt-edged book.

"Father," said Peter, "I could not resist the pleasure of obliging Mademoiselle Marguerite, and I hope we shall be the better for it. My lord will not annoy us any more, you will see; my lady will speak in our favour, and I shall have gained the friendship of the most amiable young lady in the world."

The miller, nevertheless, was quite determined to

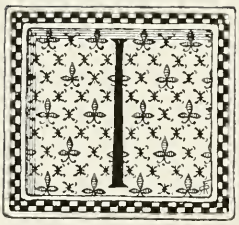
chastise his son; but Claudine carried Peter away saying, "Wait a while, John Peter; stop, at least, until we see whether what our child says will happen or not."

But on the morrow the servant from the castle did not come as usual.

"They have no longer any need of me," said Peter, "and I am forgotten; but I do not regret it at all, since I have gratified Mademoiselle Marguerite."

Chapter IX

The Puppet Play



T was not any fault of Marguerite's that Peter came no more to the castle. She would have liked to have him sent for to read the play; but the Baron's reply was, that it would be better to get the children's governess to read the piece, and thus they might dispense with Peter altogether. Now, as the governess was old, and wore large spectacles which pinched her nose, and her voice was broken and drawling, all the charm of the performance was destroyed. The children regretted Peter's absence, and Marguerite was very sorry indeed that she had asked him for his gilt-edged book.

One day the daughter of a great lord in the neighbourhood came to the castle, and, to amuse her, they

THE GOVERNESS

had one of the plays of the wonderful theatre acted. She had scarcely expressed her admiration and pleasure when Marguerite exclaimed:

"My dear friend, as my theatre seems to please you so much, I am most happy to be able to make you a present of it. Do take it home with you."

The girl accepted the beautiful present, tenderly embraced her friend, and carried away the copper box, the wand, and the gilt-edged book. The Baron, who was out hunting, fell into a violent passion when he learned what Marguerite had done, and would have whipped her, but the Baroness interfered to prevent him, saying, "If our Marguerite is generous, it is a rare and good failing, for which I will not allow her to be punished."

The children, however, were very much at a loss, now that they had their theatre no longer. Their ordinary games afforded them no more amusement, and they did nothing but gape and yawn from morning till evening.

"At least, if Peter were here," said they, "he would tell us the story of the Knight Jessamine and the Princess Eglantine." So at last Peter was sent for.

"Do not lose heart, my good friends," said he to the children. "You did well in giving the wonderful puppet-show away. You must never regret having been generous. I work, you know, at a carpenter's, and I will make you a theatre of wood myself. It will not be so fine, of course, as the other, and the little actors will not move about so well; but I will try to remember the play of the Knight Jessamine, and I may still recite it to you, supplying what I have forgotten by words of my own."

So Peter went and fetched his carpenter's tools; and then he sawed some planks, and constructed a theatre, with side-scenes and footlights all complete. He painted the scenery on paper. An empty jam pot, on which he drew stone-work, represented the tower of a fortress. While he worked, the Baroness made linen dolls, and cut out satin and muslin to dress the little actors with. The Chevalier Jessamine had a pretty white mantle, and the Princess Eglantine a dress of rose-coloured silk. All the other characters were soon finished, and each had a piece of wire fastened at the top of the head. The stage curtain was made out of the red lining of a

dressing-gown. The wax candles were lighted ; Peter assembled his actors ; then he gave the usual three taps, and the piece began.

THE CHEVALIER JESSAMINE

AND THE

PRINCESS EGLANTINE

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS FOR THE PUPPET-SHOW

By MADAM RAIN

CHARACTERS

Arthur, *King of England* (a bass voice).

Eglantine, *his Daughter* (a treble voice).

Christian, *Prince of Denmark* (a falsetto voice).

Sir Jessamine (a natural voice).

Paquerette, *Waiting maid to the Princess* (a shrill voice).

Guldenstern, *a Danish General* (a gruff voice).

English Courtiers and Danish Soldiers.

The Lion of the Menagerie.

Note

The Danish army may be represented by a dozen puppets held together in one hand by the wires.

ACT I.

The scene represents the garden of King Arthur's *palace London.*

Scene I.

[*Observe.—As the Princess does not move during the first three scenes, she may be fastened to a nail.*]

Eglantine *and* Paquerette.

Paquerette. Mademoiselle, dear Princess, pray do not turn your back so upon me. Do look a little at me: I am your Paquerette, your friend. Confide your trouble to me. . . . You do not reply. For the eight days that you have remained in this garden you have not once so much as opened your mouth, even to eat. This may hurt you: and, in fact, I observe that your face is very pale. You must indeed be very sad, to keep silent so long. At least move your little finger, that one may see whether you are dead or alive. It is to-day that your future husband arrives at court. . . . Ah! what do you say? It seemed to me that I heard you sigh. Is it this marriage that grieves you? Prince Christian is, notwithstanding, a most amiable lord. He has sent

you some superb presents from Denmark, but you have not even looked at them. How can you dislike this Prince, when you do not as yet know him? Come, come, Mademoiselle, do not remain thus motionless as a statue. The King, your father, will become angry at last; and, seeing that you will not stir, he will put you into a closet. Here he is, I declare, coming this way; I shall run off; for I can see plainly by the shaking of his body that he is in a passion.

[*Exit* PAQUERETTE.

SCENE II.

EGLANTINE, KING ARTHUR.

KING ARTHUR. Ungrateful girl! will you not at length break this obstinate silence? Will you not deign to make a little movement, and reply at least to your father? Tell me the cause of your grief. Speak; I listen to you. . . . . You will not? This obstinacy is becoming intolerable! My patience is exhausted! Take care, child: do not force me to use my authority; you may repent it. Prince Christian has landed from Denmark, and is going to pay his respects to you. Prepare yourself to receive him

graciously. Here he is, coming this way. I beg you, Eglantine, answer him when he speaks to you.

SCENE III.

The same, PRINCE CHRISTIAN.

KING. Approach, son-in-law; my daughter is as happy as myself to see you in London.

CHRISTIAN [*bowing*].

Incomparable Princess! flower of Great Britain! the whole of Denmark inclines before you in my royal person. War is now for ever at an end between our states; and henceforth I shall never draw the sword but to proclaim you the loveliest of the lovely; as I am myself the most valiant of knights.

[*Performs a pirouette.*

KING [*aside to his daughter*].

Salute him, Eglantine—reply. [*Aloud.*] My Lord Christian, my daughter is so affected at your gallantry that she dares not answer. Excuse, I pray you, her modesty and inexperience. Leave me alone with her for an instant; I will loosen her tongue for her.

CHRISTIAN.

Willingly, my lord: I will return in a moment, when the tongue of the peerless Eglantine shall be unloosed.

[*He makes several pirouettes as he goes out.*

Scene IV.

KING, EGLANTINE.

Unhappy child! Will you, then, drive me to despair? See in what a dreadful dilemma you place me. If I have to confess to the Prince of Denmark that my daughter has become as motionless as a statue, I shall fall ill with shame. You deserve to be shut up in a dark dungeon, in the vaults of the citadel, along with spiders and woodlice. But, first of all, I am

determined that your marriage shall take place: and I shall order you to be conducted by main force to church. If you will not pronounce the "Yes," I will say it myself; and you shall be married by force.

EGLANTINE [*throwing herself at the King's feet*].

Ah, Sire! have pity on your daughter. Do not force me to marry this Prince, whom I detest, or you will see me expire before your eyes.

KING.

Here, then, is the cause of this obstinate silence! Why do you detest this young Prince? He is not very plain; and he says himself that he is brave and witty.

EGLANTINE.

Sire, I think him frightful; and if he had wit and courage, he would not himself say that he had. Did you not observe his affectation and his pirouettes?

KING.

There is nothing to find fault with in his twirling himself round and round, for that is applauded at the opera. It is the sign, too, of ease, grace, and a good education.

EGLANTINE.

After all, my dear father, if I prove to you clearly that this Prince is nothing but a silly, boasting fellow, will you excuse me from marrying him? Know, besides, that the fairies themselves are opposed to this marriage.

KING.

O heavens! there is a mystery in all this! What will become of us if the fairies interfere! But how will you prove that the Prince is a fool and a boaster?

EGLANTINE.

Leave that to me; let him come now.

KING [*calling*].

Approach, my Lord Christian; my daughter desires to speak with you. Her tongue, happily, is loosened.

Scene V.

The same, CHRISTIAN.

EGLANTINE.

Illustrious Prince, before marrying you, I ought to

inform you of a singular event that occurred at the moment of my birth. My nurse was carrying me in her arms, when she saw a fairy come out from the wall; the fairy touched me with her wand, and bestowed several gifts upon me, and said that I should marry a knight who was capable of vying in wit with me, and who should save my life on our wedding day.

CHRISTIAN.

Charming Eglantine! there is nothing to alarm me in this prediction. Let us try our wits together: I am quite willing. My courtiers say I am made of wit. Does any danger threaten you? I am ready to save your life.

[*He assumes an apish air, and pirouettes.*

EGLANTINE.

The fairy will no doubt furnish you with an opportunity of saving my life to-day. As to our vying in wit, in consideration of the wishes of my father I will reduce it to a very simple test. I shall propound you an enigma. If you guess it, we shall be married; but if you cannot find it out, nothing in the world will

ever presuade me to become your wife. Pray tell me, then, what is that short-lived flower whose perfume is devoid of charm when it blooms alone, but which exhales a delicious odour when placed in the company of other flowers; shedding, at the same time, a particular brilliancy on all that surrounds it? In the bouquets we see, it is the first to fade, whilst its companions live for a much longer time. A vain and beautiful woman will desire to be adorned with this flower alone; a wiser one will rather choose others.

CHRISTIAN.

Amiable Eglantine, I am not acquainted with botany; but if you will give me a quarter of an hour for reflection, while I walk in the garden, I shall find out this extraordinary flower to a certainty.

EGLANTINE.

Go, walk, my lord: I will wait for your answer.

[CHRISTIAN *goes out like a tomfool.*

KING.

How can you, my daughter, expect the Prince to

guess what this flower is? There are so many in my garden that I should not be able to find it myself.

EGLANTINE.

The Prince must, nevertheless, find out the riddle, if he wishes to wed me; for these were the fairy's last words: "If Eglantine marry a prince who cannot expound the enigma, and who does not save her life, she shall be turned into a statue." You have already seen, my dear father, how very near I have been to losing the power of speech; be careful, then, how you wish to counteract the fairy. Her prediction must be fulfilled.

KING.

Alas! what a strange affair! Still, if seeing you dumb were all, one might in time get reconciled to that; but to have a statue for a daughter! such an idea is not to be endured. I feel overwhelmed with grief; and I will go and try to weep in my closet.

[*He goes out.*

ACT II.

The stage represents another part of the garden.

Scene I.

Eglantine, *the* Knight Jessamine.

KNIGHT.

Princess, what have I heard? That you are going to be married to-day to a foreigner? You promised to choose me for your husband; but, alas! I am but a poor knight, and you wish to be Queen of Denmark. I see there is no longer any hope for me: I am come therefore to bid you farewell, and to look on you for the last time. To-morrow I set out for the Holy Land, and I shall seek death in battle with the Turks.

EGLANTINE.

Ungrateful man! how dare you make me these reproaches, when I am giving myself so much trouble to get your rival out of the way? Instead of going to Palestine, think rather of rendering yourself worthy of my hand.

KNIGHT.

What must I undertake in order to be so, beautiful Eglantine? I am capable of anything. I would swim across rivers; I would dash into fire. Give me lions to combat, serpents and dragons to cut to pieces with my sword.

EGLANTINE.

What you have to do is simply to wait for the opportunity of saving my life, as the fairy bade. You must keep yourself quiet; do not bound thus over the trees and flower-beds: be prudent, and endure patiently the presence of your rival.

KNIGHT.

Ah! how can I do so, Princess? Love makes me bound; jealousy and anxiety cause me to jump over the trees and flower-beds: I cannot help it.

EGLANTINE.

Jump, then, if you like: everybody will see your love and jealousy; my father will be told of it; I shall be imprisoned in the citadel; you will never be my husband; and I shall die of grief.

KNIGHT.

Ah! it would indeed be an unpardonable weakness to disobey you, dearest Eglantine. I will become reasonable in order to deserve you. See! I have already left off jumping; and I keep myself as steady as a doctor on my legs. Love alone has changed me thus;—at least, love and the hope you have given me by the charming words I have just heard you utter. Permit me, at least, to throw myself at your feet and kiss your hand.

EGLANTINE.

No, Sir Knight; that would not be proper; besides, the gold lace on your mantle would catch hold of the embroidery on my dress; we should not be able to separate them; and thus it would be seen that you had thrown yourself at my feet. Your excess of tenderness does not, however, displease me. Adieu, Chevalier; I am going to sigh a little in my boudoir, for I feel my heart very much agitated.

[*She goes out.*

Scene II.

Jessamine, Christian *in pursuit of a butterfly.*

knight [*aside*].

Who is this stranger who is running after a butterfly? Let me observe him in silence.

christian.

There, it has settled on a flower. It is a tulip. The butterfly ought to know: I will tell the Princess that her mysterious flower is a tulip. But here is a person belonging to the Court.

knight [*approaching*].

You are a foreigner, Sir, no doubt?

christian.

Yes, Sir; I am the equerry of the Prince of Denmark, and am delighted to make your acquaintance. I was amusing myself by reflecting on an enigma, which you may perhaps assist me in solving. What flower is that whose charms are increased twofold when placed amongst flowers less brilliant than itself? A beautiful and vain woman desires to possess it in preference to its neighbours, but a wise woman would

desire rather to possess the others which are less fleeting.

KNIGHT.

It must be *youth*, Sir. Its brilliancy is doubled when talents and virtue attend it. It passes away while the other flowers remain. The frivolous woman will desire no other advantage than brilliancy; the wise one will prefer talents and virtue, which survive youth.

CHRISTIAN.

I thank you very much, Sir. You are right. That's just it. I will go directly and find the King and the Princess. What happiness! I have guessed the riddle. Oh! how fortunate a Prince of Denmark is in being endowed with sense.

[*He goes out in a pirouette.*

Scene III.

KNIGHT [*alone*].

What did he say?—find the Princess?—guessed the riddle? Have I, then, been furnishing arms against myself? Is this foreigner the Prince of Denmark?

Should this be so, I have nothing to do but to drown myself. Jealousy is tearing at my heart. In spite of my promises to the beautiful Eglantine, I cannot conceal the transports of my passion. My agony is dreadful! [*He jumps over trees and flower-beds.*] I can endure it no longer. Love carries me away to commit a thousand extravagances. I will go; I will fly in search of the Princess, and get before my rival if there is yet time. [*He goes out.*

ACT III.

The scene represents a fortress.

Scene I.

The King *and several* Courtiers, Prince Christian; *and the* Knight Jessamine *at the top of the Citadel;* Eglantine *at the foot of the tower.*

EGLANTINE.

Oh dear! what will become of me? The Prince of Denmark has already found out the riddle. Nothing now remains for him to do but to save my life in order to merit my hand. The fairy has been to see

me in my boudoir, and has told me to fear nothing; but if it is her design to make me wed this Christian, whom I do not love, I shall be the most unhappy of queens. Never will I consent to it! I prefer rather to become a statue.

KING [*from the top of the tower*].

Admire, son-in-law, the prospect from this tower. Regard those plains that stretch far out in the distance—the sea, which one may perceive in the horizon. Is it not fine?

CHRISTIAN.

Exquisitely fine, Sire. The keen air we breathe up here will give us an appetite for the wedding-feast. We will amuse ourselves again soon in guessing some more riddles: I am uncommonly clever at that game.

EGLANTINE.

O heavens! I see the Chevalier up above there behaving like a madman. He will be committing some imprudence or other. The fairy is forsaking me. Ah! unhappy Eglantine, thou hast nothing left thee now but to die.

Scene II.

The same. PAQUERETTE *running.*

PAQUERETTE.

Mademoiselle, fly quickly! the lion from the menagerie has broken loose out of his cage! He is coming this way! He will devour you if you do not run away! [*Exit, running.*

EGLANTINE.

Help! help! the lion has broken loose from his cage! He is coming towards me! I am lost! He will devour me! Help, my dear papa!

KING [*from the top of the tower*].

Wait a moment, daughter. I am coming down with my soldiers, and we will slay the lion.

EGLANTINE.

Alas! my father, it will take you a quarter of an hour to get down, and the lion is only two steps off. He will have time to eat me. Jump down from the tower, or I am dead!

KING.

My poor daughter, I am no longer nimble enough to jump a wall two hundred feet high.

EGLANTINE.

Lord Christian, behold now the opportunity of saving my life.

CHRISTIAN.

Consider, Mademoiselle, that if I jump, I shall break my arms and legs, at least; and could I kill a lion with broken legs and arms?

EGLANTINE.

And you, Knight, my dear Jessamine, friend of my childhood, will you leave me to be devoured by this terrible lion? Hark to his roaring! Here he is! here he is!

[*The lion roars behind the scenes, and comes bounding on to the stage.*

KNIGHT [*from the tower*].

Compose yourself, Princess; I fly to your succour, though I break all my bones.

[*He jumps from the tower, rushes on the lion, and slays it.*

EGLANTINE.

You have saved my life, Chevalier; you deserve to be my husband. But wherefore, alas! did the Prince of Denmark guess the riddle?

KNIGHT.

It was I that guessed it. I told him the answer a little while ago.

EGLANTINE.

Oh! how glad I am! The fairy has not deceived me! you shall be my husband. You may now throw yourself at my feet, Sir Knight, and if your mantle does get entangled in my robe it will not matter.

CHRISTIAN.

It shall never be said that the Chevalier Jessamine has outdone me in courage. Since he has jumped, I intend to jump also.

[*He throws himself headlong down and lies stretched motionless at the foot of the tower.*]

KING.

Oh! unlucky accident! the Prince has broken his head, and I very much fear that no one can mend it

again. Though one sees fathers marrying their daughters to men with no head, it would not be prudent to imitate them. But I espy an army advancing. It is the Danes coming to revenge the death of their Prince. Alas! they will have time to ravage the whole of my kingdom before I can reach the bottom of the tower. Already do I hear their trumpet sounding the attack. [*A trumpet is heard.*

KNIGHT.

I am ready to fight them, Sire; I will repulse them and kick them back into their own country again.

Scene III.

The same. General Guldenstern *at the head of the Danes.*

GULDENSTERN.

Restore us our Prince, or we will set fire to the city and slaughter all the inhabitants.

KNIGHT.

There your Prince is; carry him away, and rid us of your presence.

GULDENSTERN.

I accept not that Prince. I must have a Christian in good condition, with a whole head, and not a split one. Since you have broken our Sovereign, you must pay for another for us.

KNIGHT.

He broke his own head of his own accord. Quit England immediately, foreign rabble, or you will have me about you.

GULDENSTERN.

Soldiers, strike this knight; surround him; fell him to the ground! Long live Denmark! Vengeance! vengeance! Let us pillage the city of London.

KNIGHT.

I'll take good care you don't! Long live old England! [*He rushes against the Danes and kicks them all away.*] Sire, your kingdom is delivered of its enemies.

KING [*from the top of the tower*].

Brave Jessamine! thou hast merited my daughter's hand; I give her to thee. As soon as I get down

thou shalt be married to her, and thou shalt be my heir. But I am afraid Denmark will begin a terrible war against me.

EGLANTINE.

Oh, no, dear father, we shall have no war, for the play is finished. The curtain is going to fall, the wax candles are dying out, and I have scarcely time to bow to the audience and beg their pardon for all the nonsense we have just been saying.

Chapter X

The Rescue of Marguerite

A FEW days after the representation of the play, the Baron's children went out for a ramble accompanied by their old governess. The good lady seated herself on the grass, while the children engaged in play, or ran about in the meadow. To pass away the time, the governess, putting on her spectacles and drawing the newspaper from her pocket, perused the "Foot" story with the deepest attention and the liveliest interest. It was a long romance that had been going on some three years back, and had reached the eight hundred and thirty-sixth chapter; and as the tale made no progress, but stopped always at the same point, the poor governess fell into a profound slumber.

While their guardian thus slept, the two boys were

engaged in climbing trees to gather apples, and little Marguerite was roaming in search of flowers to the extreme borders of the meadow. She there found herself on the bank of a streamlet which noiselessly threaded its way through the long grass. On the other side of a thorn-hedge ran a path, along which Peter was passing on his way back from the village. Hearing piercing cries come from the meadow, he stopped all of a sudden. It was Marguerite, who was calling for help. "Oh, how dreadful!" she exclaimed. "Here is a large serpent crawling in the grass; it is coming to bite me. Governess!—brothers!—come and save me! Alas! they do not hear me. Oh, if I should die!"

Peter crossed the thorn-hedge, and ran into the meadow. "Don't be afraid, Mademoiselle," said he. "What you see there is not a serpent—it is a little viper which will not bite you if you do not touch it; but, to reassure you, I am going to kill it." With the heel of his shoe he then crushed the head of the viper.

"How courageous you are!" said Marguerite. "Come with me to the castle; I will tell Mamma that you have saved my life."

"There is no great merit, Mademoiselle," said Peter, "in what I have done. I am obliged to go now to my master the carpenter's house; but I will come and see you at the castle some other time."

"Go to your work, dear Peter," replied Marguerite. "I shall never forget your brave action. Let us embrace each other, for to-day I am happy to see that your face is not too dirty for me to kiss."

Peter kissed the little girl on both her cheeks, and Marguerite, in returning his embrace, said:

"If my prayers are heard, you shall one day be my Jessamine and I will be your Eglantine."

The next day the Baroness came to the farm. She, too, embraced Peter, and presented him with a box of carpenter's tools, and a dozen books bound in morocco, among which were works on geometry, ancient history, and the history of France from the times of Pharamond to King Robert. Afterwards she put a well-filled purse into Claudine's hands, and bade her employ its contents in procuring instruction for her son.

Peter, full of gratitude, opened the books after the departure of the Baroness, and set himself to study in

PETER AND THE VIPER

order to become soon as wise as he was courageous. By the end of six months he knew by heart the whole contents of the books ; others were given him by the Baroness, and these he perused as assiduously. He was soon advanced enough to be able to instruct the village schoolmaster.

Chapter XI

Mr. Wind Imprisoned

NE night John Peter and his wife were quietly seated in the chimney-corner of a snug room. The shutters were closed, and the windows hung with thick curtains. The room and the ante-room both had double doors, so that not the least draught was to be felt. The miller and his wife were rejoicing over the Baroness's bounty, and they enjoyed their comfort the more fully as they heard the wind howling without. The little spirits could not find the least hole by which to effect an entrance into the farmhouse. Claudine, however, by dint of listening, fancied she could distinguish their voices: "Thankless John Peter," said they, "thou owest all to us, and yet thou refusest us a shelter. No more broken panes, no

MR. WIND LAUGHS

more crevices where we may sigh and hum. It is with the greatest difficulty that we can manage to whistle quite softly through the keyhole."

"Does Mr. Wind want to come again into our house?" cried John Peter, somewhat alarmed.

"There would be no great harm in that," said Claudine. "If he has a mind to do so, let him. Perhaps we shall find ourselves as much the better for it as we were the first time."

So saying, Claudine flung open all the doors. At the same instant Mr. Wind appeared, and came rushing and whirling himself round and round into the room. The train of his mantle rose to the ceiling, and his two large wings filled half the room. "Oh!" said he, with his gruff voice, "there's a change here! You've made your fortune, then, after all, in spite of your stupidity, Master John Peter. Why, you are as well housed as a marquis. Give me an easy-chair, that I may repose myself on your cushions, my lord miller."

Mr. Wind burst out laughing with such violence that the window-panes shook, and little Peter woke up suddenly out of his sleep.

"By Jove!" resumed Mr. Wind, "how very comfortable one is in this easy-chair! Well, thou art a good fellow, John Peter; I forgive thy faults, and I thank thee for thy kind reception; but as thou art now rich, I shall not give thee anything. So, adieu, friend!"

At the very moment Mr. Wind was preparing to fly away, Peter, who had slipped down from his bed, shut the four doors of the room and ante-room.

Immediately Mr. Wind was seen to totter on his legs, and fall back again into his easy-chair. His fat cheeks sank in, forming a thousand wrinkles. His broad chest shrank up, his body gradually became thinner and thinner, and his wings smaller than a sparrow's. He would have cried out, but his throat gave vent to a faint, husky sound, as though he had grown suddenly hoarse and lost his voice entirely: "My friends," said he, "do not detain me. It would be an abominable trick to do so. Give me air—I am stifling! For pity's sake open the window! You cannot wish to kill me, surely?"

"Mr. Wind cannot die," said Peter. "We are only going to keep you a prisoner, and you must come to terms with us to be free again."

MR. WIND CRIES

"Good people," replied Mr. Wind, "what do you want of me?"

"I want a great deal of money," said John Peter.

"We must have," said Claudine, "a recompense for the blows which the giant who was shut up in the little golden cask gave us with his stick."

"And I," said Peter, "must be created a knight or baron."

"Miserable, imprudent, man that I was," murmured Mr. Wind, "to come into this house! My friends, I will give you money and magical casks enow; but it is only the king that can make knights and barons. Let me depart."

"You shall not," cried Claudine; "Peter is right —you must give in to us."

Mr. Wind made a last desperate effort to escape; but John Peter, Claudine, and Peter all three began to blow upon him, and he found himself so weak that he could no longer offer them any resistance.

They made him fly all about the room like a feather, he had become so small and light; and so they drove him into an air-tight closet, with two doors and no window, and they double-locked him in.

John Peter had scarcely taken the key out, and stopped up the hole with putty, when the noise without ceased. The tempest, being deprived of Mr. Wind, fell instantly. The clouds could no longer fly. The leaves of the trees stirred no more, and the mill-sails stopped.

Chapter XII

Madam Rain Imprisoned

THE miller, his wife, and little Peter were taking counsel together as to how they might obtain a large ransom from Mr. Wind, when they heard water falling in torrents, and the chattering of the little spirits on the roof. "Ungrateful John Peter," said the spirits, "we have made thy fortune, and yet thou refusest to admit us into thy house. We slip over the slates, we flow from the spouts into the gutters, but there are no more broken panes—no more holes in the walls; so we can no longer wet thy furniture, nor jump into thy room. It is in vain that we fall by thousands, we little drops, drops, drops."

"Does Madam Rain wish to come in again?" said the miller.

"Let us open the window for her instantly," cried Claudine. As soon as the window was opened, Madam Rain stepped in. Floods of tears fell from her eyes, her clothes were more drenched than at her first visit, and her nose more swelled by the cold in her head.

"What has happened here?" said she in a whining tone; "I did not know the house again. Reach me a good arm-chair, John Peter, for I am weary, and want to yawn and lounge awhile in this nice apartment. From what I see, I presume it is I who have brought you this good luck. The copper box and gilt-edged book have served little Peter a good turn. You have now no more need of me, so I will go and do good to others. Adieu, my friends!"

She was going to slip out at the window, when Claudine hastily let down the Venetian blinds, closed the shutters, and drew together the double curtains. Madam Rain fell instantly back into her arm-chair fainting. Her tears ceased to flow, her swelled nose returned to its proper size, her garments became dry, her face smiled, and seemed almost rosy. "Oh, despair!" cried she in a less drawling voice: "I am

POOR MADAM RAIN

caught. Do not kill me, my friends—do not shut me up in this hot house. I am drying up !—help !—help ! For charity's sake, open the window ! "

" Madam Rain cannot die," said Peter ; " she shall not go out of this house without paying for her freedom."

" Pay ! good heavens ! and what do you want me to pay ? Speak quickly, for I can no longer endure it. If you do not give me back my tears and my cold in the head I shall have an hysterical fit."

" That won't do," said John Peter ; " when the fit comes on, I will throw a glass of water in your face, the way I treat my wife when she has a fancy to faint. You must immediately make terms with us. I want some money from you ; Claudine asks for a magical gift ; and Peter desires letters patent of nobility."

" You shall have money," said Madam Rain, " and the magical gift ; but Peter will not become a baron until he has distinguished himself by brilliant achievements. Let me go. Foolish, thoughtless woman that I was to allow myself to fall into this snare ! "

Madam Rain sobbed aloud, and raised her hand

to her eyes to find a tear; but there was not water enough to make one. She then made a last effort to escape; but John Peter armed himself with an umbrella, Claudine took up the warming-pan, and Peter threw a towel, which he had warmed at the fire, over the dame's diminished nose. Down she fell on the hearth-rug in a swoon, and Claudine directly took hold of her round the waist and pitched her into the kitchen sink. They heard her slip down the leaden pipe and fall into the cistern at the bottom. And John Peter carefully closed the lid, by putting a large flagstone on the top of it.

At the same moment, the spout was empty, the rivulets ceased to murmur outside, the leaves of the trees dried, the earth absorbed all the water that had fallen, and the sky put off its mantle of clouds and put on that with stars all over it, and the moon shone out clear and bright far away over the plain.

MADAM RAIN, IN THE MILLER'S COTTAGE

Chapter XIII

Mr. Wind's Errand

T that time William, Duke of Normandy, undertook to conquer England. With this end in view he gathered together all his soldiers, and called under his banner the lords from every country who were willing to take part in the war.

The Baron, who had begun to feel weary of the life he led at his castle, resolved to join Duke William, and repaired to Caen for that purpose. The army embarked in a number of small vessels and landed in England. Prince Harold, the English chief, assembled his troops in London; and marched with them to meet Duke William in defence of his kingdom. The two armies met on the plain of Hastings and a dreadful battle was expected. The Baroness was all

this time very uneasy as to the safety of her husband, who had not sent her any tidings. The children, seeing the grief of their mother, did not dare to play together, and Mademoiselle Marguerite fairly wept when she thought of the dangers to which her papa was being exposed. One day Peter came to the castle and found everybody there in a state of consternation.

"Do not grieve, my lady," said he; "and you, my dear Marguerite, dry your tears; in one hour we shall have news of the Baron."

Peter ran to the farm, and, entering Mr. Wind's prison, found him stretched on a sofa quite benumbed, and so shrunken that his body was scarcely discernible amid the folds of his garments.

"Get up, Mr. Wind," said Peter; "I have an important commission for you. Should you not like to take a little air, and to go free over the seas?"

"Yes, undoubtedly," replied Mr. Wind. "I should be very glad to do so, for I am wasting away in this horrible dungeon."

"Well," said Peter, "I will give you your liberty for one hour; but you must promise me to execute an

MR. WIND AT LIBERTY

important commission, and to return within the hour."

"What commission?" said Mr. Wind; "answer me quickly, and make haste to open the doors, for I am ready to start."

"In one moment," said Peter; "but you are not to set out on a journey in this off-hand way. First promise me that you will return within one hour."

"And what need is there of my promising you?"

"Why, if you do not promise, I shan't open the door."

Mr. Wind made the promise immediately.

"Now," said Peter, "go to England; fly like lightning to the camp of Duke William; observe what is passing there, and bring me news of the Baron. You have no need of more than one hour for all this; but I give you a quarter of an hour's grace to play truant a little." Peter opened the door; Mr. Wind inhaled a puff of air, and his breast swelled out directly just like a balloon. Then he opened his large wings, and darted away over tall trees and church steeples, making a most terrific whistling.

He had been gone about an hour and a quarter when Peter saw him coming back.

"Oh," said Mr. Wind, "what a fine journey this has been to me! and I have been amused beyond measure. The two armies fought on the plain of Hastings. Duke William was victorious, and Harold was killed. The Normans, when I left the plain, had commenced a march towards London. The Baron conducted himself right valiantly; he is quite well, and the Duke has promised him lands and honours as rewards for his bravery."

"Very good, very good indeed," said Peter, shutting the doors; "I thank you for your promptitude; go to sleep now till to-morrow."

Peter flew to the castle to give the Baroness and the children this good news; but he would not say by whom it was conveyed to him. The news was so good that it was readily believed.

At the end of fifteen days the Baroness received from her husband a letter, in which, to her astonishment, she read word for word the intelligence she had received from Peter so many days before. She rewarded Peter by loading him with various presents and delicacies, and she gave him permission to come to the castle every day to see his friend Marguerite.

Chapter XIV

Peter Goes to London

ONTHS and years passed away, and Peter, one fine day, attained his fourteenth year. As he was tall and robust, he wished to go to seek his fortune in England. So he bade adieu to the Baroness, and embraced the children. He was provided with every necessary for his adventure—money, provisions, and a horse. Marguerite presented him with a beautiful handkerchief embroidered by herself, as a token of her friendship. John Peter wished him good luck, and Claudine pressed him in her arms and wept.

"Don't cry, mother," said Peter; "I shall return to you very soon, after becoming, perhaps, a rich and great lord. Now mind, do not let Mr. Wind and Madam Rain escape. Send them to England every

morning, and they will bring you back some news of me. I shall make good use of them in the service of Duke William. Above all, do not forget to force them to take the oath before you permit them to go out."

Claudine promised to attend to these instructions of her son.

Peter now mounted his horse and set off, pressing to his heart the handkerchief embroidered by Marguerite's own hand. He travelled through a part of Brittany, and at the end of three days reached Caen. Here he found some Normans about to proceed to England, and they took him into their vessel; and Mr. Wind, whom Claudine had let out, very propitiously filled their sails. On the fifteenth day from the time he left his home, Peter entered the great city of London, where Duke William's residence was. Peter took lodgings at a small inn, and awaited an opportunity of presenting himself at Court. One morning, as he was enjoying the air at his window, Peter saw Mr. Wind coming swiftly towards him, and on reaching the window, Mr. Wind said, "Peter, thy mother has sent me to know how thou art, and to ask if thou requirest my services."

"Give my love to my mother," said Peter, "and tell her I am quite well. I have no other orders for you to-day, but do not fail to come to me again to-morrow."

Madam Rain could not travel so fast as Mr. Wind, and did not arrive in London before the afternoon.

"Hast thou any orders to give me?" said she.

"No orders to-day," replied Peter; "but do not fail to return to-morrow."

Chapter XV

A Happy Ending

UKE WILLIAM adored his wife, the Princess Matilda, whom he had left at Caen. Every week he sent her a special message; but, as eight days elapsed before the return of the courier, he never had any news from her of very recent occurrence. Peter went to the Duke, and, throwing himself at his feet, said, "My lord! I have at my command a courier much more expeditious than any one of those you employ, and if you will intrust your messages to me, they shall be conveyed to your palace at Caen, and answers to them brought you daily."

The Duke was willing to make trial of Peter's services. On the morrow came Mr. Wind, at the same hour as on the preceding day, and Peter imme-

diately despatched him to Caen with a message for the Duchess. An instant had scarcely elapsed before Mr. Wind returned, and Peter was acquainted with all that had been done by the Duchess in the course of the morning. He conveyed the details to the Duke, who was perfectly astonished ; and the more so when, a few days after, his own courier arrived, bringing him letters which confirmed all the information that he had received from Peter. The Duke now wished to engage permanently a messenger so skilful and expeditious in the transmission of messages. He therefore took Peter to his own residence to live, and made use of him every day, without suspecting the means which Peter employed.

Other noblemen had recourse to him also, to ascertain what their wives were doing ; and some of them were by this means made acquainted with many facts which they would much rather not have known ; and so, not being such good husbands as the Duke William, they soon gave up this quick way of sending their messages, and returned to the ordinary mail. Peter, notwithstanding, made his fortune by his

profession. He managed to save one hundred thousand crowns, and he sent this sum to his father and mother, requesting them to purchase the first château for sale in their neighbourhood. And he wrote a very tender and loving letter to Marguerite, in which he told her that he had but one step more to take, and then he should become a knight, like Jessamine.

After a while, Duke William was crowned King of England. And when he was preparing to enjoy in peace the results of his conquests, he was apprised that the Danes and the Saxons were each sending a considerable fleet against him. Great preparations were instantly made for preventing an invasion of England by these enemies. At the same time Peter went to the King and said, "Sire, do not waste your money nor fatigue your soldiers to no purpose. I will deliver you from the Danes and Saxons before their fleets arrive in sight of the English coast. You need not send out a single ship to meet them."

"Thou art a little sorcerer, then?" said the King, laughing.

"No, Sire; I am a good Christian. Do you rely

on me, and in four-and-twenty hours you will have no more enemies."

"Well, I will wait four-and-twenty hours before I give orders to prepare for war."

Next morning Peter was very early at his window, looking out in the distance for Mr. Wind, and he soon saw him coming with great speed.

"Do not lose time in resting yourself, Mr. Wind," said Peter; "but go and meet the Danes and the Saxons. Blow with all your might on their ships, and scatter them over the ocean. Prevent them from approaching England, but drown as few of the men as possible."

"A very agreeable commission," said Mr. Wind. "I will go out and execute it properly." So off he darted, swift as an arrow. He distended his cheeks, and blew up waves as high as mountains; and in less than an hour the ships of both the fleets were dispersed and destroyed. A courier carried to Court tidings of what had been done the very same evening, and the King was so overjoyed that he embraced Peter, and was going to bestow on him a magnificent reward, when another courier, covered

with dust, entered the King's cabinet, and announced that the province of Cornwall had revolted, and that a countless host of armed men were approaching to surprise the city of London. The King now commanded the trumpets to be sounded; all the lords armed themselves, and took to horse. The soldiers marched out of the city and arranged themselves on the plain in battle array. The enemy had now arrived in sight.

The Cornish rebels were fierce; they uttered savage yells, and slaughtered with bloodthirsty eagerness all those who fell in their way. The great King William, though intrepid, began to feel somewhat concerned at his present position. Just as the two armies were about to give battle, he saw near him a cavalier in black armour, with the visor down.

"Who art thou?" said the King to the cavalier; "and why dost thou place thyself so near to me?"

"I am one of your Majesty's servants," replied the black cavalier; "I am watching over your person, and I am come to insure you the victory."

"And what are those strange personages whom I see behind you? Who is that tall figure in a

THE ROUT OF THE CORNISH REBELS

mantle, and that woman with a scarf of rainbow hue?"

"One is my equerry, and the other my servant," said the cavalier; "it is to them that we shall presently owe our safety."

The King gave the signal for combat; the enemy advanced with fearful yells; the black cavalier turned to the two figures behind him, and shouted, "Do your duty!" Instantly the two strange personages were seen to soar to a prodigious height in the air. Then a terrible wind blew in the faces of the enemy, mingled with a pelting rain which drenched their very skins, and threw them into complete disorder without in the least inconveniencing the Norman army. At the first charge the rebels were driven back and beaten by the King's men. In the thickest part of the battle the King observed the black cavalier behaving right valiantly, and dealing terrible strokes with his sword on the enemy around him. Ten thousand rebels were slain on the spot, and the rest took to flight. The King ordered the cavalier to be called, and said to him, in presence of his Court:

"Young stranger, it is to thee that I owe the

success of this day. Have the goodness now to make thyself known to me, and, for the service thou hast rendered, ask of me some great favour. Whatever it be, I promise thee beforehand it shall be granted."

The black cavalier then raised the visor of his helmet, and the King and all his Court recognised Peter.

"Sire," said he, "I am Peter, your humble messenger; since you wish to recompense my feeble services, bestow on me letters of nobility and make me a knight." The King instantly embraced Peter, and dubbed him knight. On returning to his palace he wrote out letters of nobility, and Peter was called the Chevalier de la Pierre.

"And now, Sire," said he to the King, "if your Majesty wishes to make me the happiest of all men, your Majesty has only to ask the Baron, whose vassal I am no longer, to give me his daughter in marriage. I am rich enough to aspire to so noble an alliance."

William the Conqueror demanded Marguerite of the Baron, and gave Peter a hundred thousand francs to pay his wedding expenses. The Knight took leave of the King and returned to his own

MR. WIND AND MADAM RAIN ARE RELEASED

country with squires and a retinue corresponding to his new position and title. The Baron freely consented to bestow on him the hand of Marguerite, and the marriage was celebrated with great splendour at the château. The Chevalier de la Pierre retired soon after to an estate bought by John Peter with the money sent from London. Mr. Wind and Madam Rain wished to make the young couple a wedding-present. The Chevalier received from the hands of Mr. Wind a magical ring, by virtue of which Peter, after the lapse of twenty years, found his wife still as beautiful as on the day of her marriage; and Madam Rain put on Marguerite's neck an enchanted necklace, which made her see her husband always young and amiable.

Having received these precious gifts, Peter could no longer, with a good grace, detain Mr. Wind and Madam Rain as prisoners; so the doors of the farm-house and the lid of the cistern were opened, and they returned, the one to the Southern Mountain, and the other to the Western Grotto. They had, however, got so much into the habit of crossing and recrossing the Channel, that they have still a particular liking for England, though King William

no longer needs their services. Hence it is that in London macintoshes are worn, and that an Englishman never travels without taking his umbrella with him.

The newly married couple lived happily, and never quarrelled but once, and then only because they had forgotten on that day to wear the magical ring and the enchanted necklace. Ever after, Marguerite was good-tempered, and the Chevalier enamoured of his wife. They had a great number of children, and it is from them that the great and noble family of the Pierrots de la Pierre has descended, so celebrated to this day in Lower Brittany.

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